

**Written Testimony Supporting
Proposed House Bill 7285, An Act Concerning Complaints That Allege Misconduct By
Law Enforcement Agency Personnel**

Distinguished members of the Joint Committee on Judiciary:

My name is Maria T. Sandoval-Schaefer, and I am a resident of Hamden, Connecticut. This is to testify in support of Proposed House Bill 7285, which intends to ensure compliance with the provisions of section 7-294bb of the Connecticut general statutes concerning the acceptance, processing, and investigation of a complaint from a member of the public relating to alleged misconduct committed by law enforcement agency personnel.

As an organizer of Showing Up for Racial Justice – New Haven, I have come across numerous instances of excessive use of force by police to unarmed civilians in the City of New Haven. Although I have never been subject of police misconduct myself, I have learned from community members that they feel police is racially profiling them during simple traffic stops, for “hanging-out” around their neighborhoods, or in the case of activists, for exercising their civil right to publicly demonstrate. Unfortunately, without a fair and transparent complaint process, many of these cases are dismissed and don’t make it into the public records.

Proposed House Bill 7285 recognizes that the current police complaint process is not working. I support the intention of Proposed House Bill 7285, but ask this committee to amend this bill so that its intent is fully realized. A 2017 study by the ACLU of Connecticut found widespread problems with the complaint process in Connecticut police agencies, such as complaint forms being only available at police stations, or refusing to accept or actively discouraging anonymous complaints. It is clear that we must amend H.B. 7285 to:

- 1) establish meaningful penalties for law enforcement agencies that do not comply with state complaint acceptance and investigation laws,
- 2) create a standardized complaint form that is compliant with best practices and translated into all commonly-spoken languages in Connecticut, and
- 3) require law enforcement agencies to track complaint data and to annually report specific complaint information to the Connecticut Office of Policy and Management.

In the City of New Haven, there is a general feeling of police distrust, being especially evident in communities of color. Civilians deserve access to an anonymous, transparent, accessible, and free of intimidation process of complaint of police misconduct in order to regain that trust and effectively collaborate with the police department in creating safe neighborhoods. Amending H.B. 7285 will encourage the community's faith in the police complaint process and ensure that we are holding our law enforcement agencies accountable.

I urge the members of this committee to amend and support Proposed House Bill 7285.

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